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INTRODUCTIONS TO  
NOTABLE POEMS

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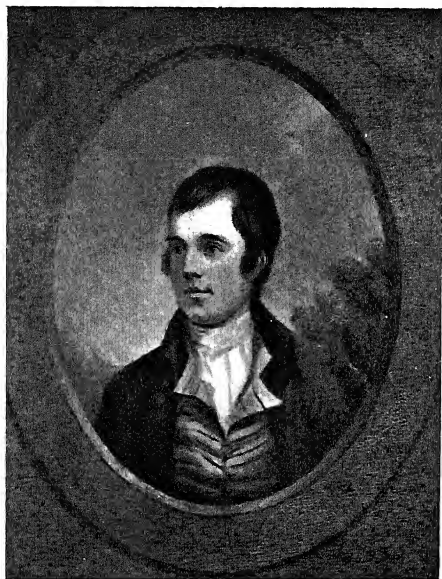
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CHRISTMAS TODAY

INTRODUCTIONS TO NOTABLE POEMS





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ROBERT BURNS

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INTRODUCTIONS  
TO NOTABLE  
POEMS

BY  
HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

ILLUSTRATED

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

NO one who knows and loves English poetry can fail to regret that so many cultivated readers have turned away from a fountain of refreshment so abundant, and that so many other readers, who would find delight in poetry if they knew it well, are leaving out of their lives so powerful an influence against the materializing tendency of the age. The selection of poetry presented in this volume has no more ambitious purpose than to bring together in convenient form a small body of verse in English of the highest quality ;



## Introductory Note

verse which appeals with equal force to those whose prime interest is in perfection of form and to those to whom poetry is the inevitable language of the human spirit in its moments of exaltation. No attempt has been made to give the selection a representative character other than that secured by bringing together the different verse forms; and even in this respect the choice has only followed the line of the most beautiful and memorable poetry. In the Introductions the endeavor has been made to set the poems in their environment, so to speak, by sketching briefly the development of the poem and of the poet; by bringing together the facts which throw light on the making of the poem; and by pointing out the characteristic qualities not only of the selections but of

## Introductory Note

the verse forms of which they are examples.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

ROBERT BURNS. . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY . .	<i>Facing page 34</i>
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW “ “	52
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. . . “ “	68
EDGAR ALLAN POE . . . . “ “	86
JOHN KEATS . . . . . “ “	100
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR . . “ “	114
ROBERT HERRICK . . . . . “ “	136
RICHARD LOVELACE . . . . “ “	140
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE . . . “ “	186

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INTRODUCTIONS TO  
NOTABLE POEMS





## THE BLESSED DAMOSEL

**W**HAT is known as the Pre-Raphaelite movement in English art was one of those events which discredit abstract theories of racial development and make broad and dogmatic generalization a vain show. For in the very heart of a century surrendered, according to its critics, to materialism and in a country devoted to trade, a fountain of fresh feeling for religion and art suddenly gushed out of the soil; and wonder, which was officially declared to be dead in an age of shop-keeping, had a new rebirth. The names of Newman, Keble, Pugin, Hunt, Millais, Burne-Jones, Ruskin, Brown, Ros-



## The Blessed Damosel

setti, recall a sudden splendor flung on the commonplace life of the middle of the last century. The reaction against the tyranny of the fact which always sets in after a long abstinence from the things of the imagination, a long indifference to the instinctive romanticism of the spirit in the great adventure of life, was never more radical and daring than in the band of ardent young men who formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848; chief among whom, from the standpoint of literary achievement, was the author of "The Blessed Damosel."

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was three fourths Italian and one fourth English in blood. His father was an exile, a scholar, translator, and teacher; his sister Maria Francesca wrote "A Shadow of Dante," which Lowell

## The Blessed Damosel

regarded as the best comment in English on the Florentine poet; his sister Christina wrote many poems of notable intensity of feeling and richness of diction; his brother William Michael wrote prose and verse of highly individual quality. It was a rarely gifted group of children who grew up in the Rossetti home, in an atmosphere charged with intellectual energy and vitality. Before most English boys of his time had learned to read Dante Gabriel knew the story of "Hamlet," and Dante was an overshadowing presence in the home and deeply affected the sensitive imaginations of a household domesticated in London but breathing the spiritual air of Italy. The future painter and poet studied Latin, French, and German in King's College school; Italian was his

## The Blessed Damosel

mother tongue quite as much as English. In his fourteenth year his vocation was already pressing home its claims in his temperament and genius and he exchanged the study of languages for that of art; after a short stay in the Royal Academy Antique School he entered the studio of Maddox Brown, and made the acquaintance of the young men with whom he was to cast in his fortunes as a painter. In his nineteenth year he was a poet as well as a painter; and "The Blessed Damosel" must be counted one of the most original and beautiful of the early fruits of genius. It appeared in 1850 in the "Germ," a magazine which bore much the same relation to Pre-Raphaelism that the "Dial" bore to Transcendentalism. The "Germ" was a small and rather shabby publi-

## The Blessed Damosel

cation, judged by the typographical standards of to-day, but the air of the morning exhaled from its pages, and behind it was a brilliant fellowship of young and ardent minds bent on bringing beauty back to its rightful place in the modern world. They revolted against the commonplace temper and conventional methods of the English painters of the time; they scorned anecdotal and story-telling pictures; they insisted on high themes seriously treated; they were bent on keeping spiritual intention, veracity of detail, and freedom and courage in coloring in harmony; and they followed beauty with passionate devotion for its own sake. They did not go as far as in the ardent dreams of their youth they hoped; but they enriched English painting with splen-

## The Blessed Damosel

dor of imagination, they redeemed it from conventionality, and they brought back that feeling of wonder which is the response of the quickened imagination to the changing, many-hued pageant of life.

Rossetti's work as a painter forms a chapter by itself; his work as a poet may be briefly told. A decade after the appearance of "The Blessed Damosel" his volumes of translations, "The Early Italian Poets" and "Dante and His Circle," appeared and made the world aware of his extraordinary gifts as an interpreter of the Italian spirit and genius. At the end of another decade, in 1870, the "Poems" were issued, and at once established the fame of Rossetti as a poet of exceptional richness of imagination and picturesqueness of diction. They

## The Blessed Damosel

did not find a place in Victorian poetry without challenge, however; the sensuous note in them evoked a savage attack from Robert Buchanan, who grossly overstated his case and later acknowledged that he had been led into a serious injustice. Rossetti was sensuous, and in a few instances more frank than the reticences of nature or art permit, but he was not "fleshly." After another interval of ten years "Ballads and Sonnets" was published; and in the spring of the following year, 1882, the poet died.

Rossetti was successful in three difficult verse forms: he was a balladist of striking energy of imagination and pictorial power, and "Sister Helen," "Rose Mary," "The White Ship," and the "King's Tragedy," must be counted among the sub-

## The Blessed Damosel

stantial modern achievements in this kind of verse. He was also a sonneteer of very high rank, and "The House of Life," by reason of its splendor of imagery and cadenced music, puts him in the companionship, if not with Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth, certainly with Keats and Mrs. Browning. He was also a master of the lyric, stamping it with a quality at once individual and poignantly beautiful. "The Sea Limits," "A Last Confession," "Troy Town," "The Burden of Nineveh," and "The Woodspurge," — that masterpiece of exact observation — "The Stream's Secret," with its slow-moving music, bring out the subtlety of perception, the penetrating imagination, the sensuous beauty of diction of a poet in whom the English and Ital-

## The Blessed Damosel

ian strains were blended. "The Blessed Damosel" is not only English and Italian, but bears the touch of the painter as distinctly as of the artist. It is as deeply tinged with the romantic spirit as the "Eve of St. Agnes," but it has a magic all its own; a glow and boldness of description, a fervor of feeling, a blending of vision and sensuous imagery which give it a captivating spell. Even the immaturity which shows itself in construction and diction emphasizes the mingled sense of something remote and celestial with the familiar and human which gives this lyric a touch of mystery; the warmth of passion traversing the gulfs of space and imparting, with the aid of a charming archaicism of style and a daring concreteness of description, the beauty of reality to a dream of heaven.



## The Blessed Damosel

Rossetti is not of the elect company of poets who "see life steadily and see it whole"; his passionate interest was in beauty, which he conceived in the mystical Platonic sense; he had a fancy rich, rather than delicate, an opulent and vivid imagination, a rare power of bringing remote and elusive conceptions near by unflinching sensuousness of imagery and diction. A sense of wonder penetrates his best work, and that haunting sense of pathos which is the shadow of beauty in the world; and he was a subtle master of the technique of verse-making. He is a lonely figure, with the strangeness of exile on him; there was something esoteric in his genius, and the shadow of fate was on his life.



## THE BANKS O' DOON AND FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

**A**T the end of a hundred and fifty years after the birth of Robert Burns it is safe to assume that in his case the account which the world keeps with its men of genius has been made up and closed ; and the reputation which followed fast upon the publication of that unpretentious volume of poems at Kilmarnock in 1786 has deepened and widened into a great and lasting fame. His confused and tragically broken life has not been forgotten ; but those whose first impulse is to build monuments to righteousness by stoning sinners have been arrested by the pathos of

## The Banks o' Doon and

the struggle between Burns's soaring imagination and his sordid needs, between his powerful passions and the painfully narrow horizons of his situation. There has been no futile and immortal endeavor to hide the bare and repulsive facts in his career; but there has been, even among hardened Pharisees, a recognition of a moral problem too complicated for the touch-and-go judgments of those inferior courts whose opinions are often mere records of the blindness of human understanding. Burns made grievous mistakes in the direction of his life and paid heavily in health, art, and reputation; he had also great and generous qualities of nature, an innate nobility of spirit sometimes obscured but never obliterated, and a genius for making the heart speak which has given him

For a' That and a' That

access to the homes of the English-speaking world.

With Shakespeare and Lincoln, he has been haled into the court of public opinion as a witness to the fallacy that genius supersedes education and that to those whose lips have been touched by the divine fire no training is necessary. It happens that each of these apparent exceptions to the rule that nothing great and enduring is ever done without some form of preparation had the best of luck in specific training for his particular work. Burns was singularly fortunate in finding early precisely the material vitally adapted to his genius; and this was true of Shakespeare and Lincoln as well.

It is true, Burns was born in a cottage built of clay, on the side of

The Banks o' Doon and  
the road that runs from Ayr to the  
bridge of Doon, past the ruin of  
"Alloway's auld haunted Kirk"; that  
a few days after his birth a wild Jan-  
uary storm blew down a gable of the  
house and in a bleak dawn he was  
carried to a neighbor's for shelter—

"A blast o' Janwar' win'  
Blew hansel in on Robin;"

that his father was a kind of peasant  
farmer, of a noble rectitude, a spirited  
temper, and a devout spirit, who, for  
all his force, was bitterly beaten in  
the fight for comfort; that his school  
life, begun at the age of five, was  
soon over, and that for him the road  
ended where it usually begins for  
boys of easier condition.

These are, however, the accidents  
of condition; education is a matter  
of vitalization, inspiration, nourish-

## For a' That and a' That

ment ; and all these fell to the lot of Burns. He had rare teachers in those years when real teachers plant deep in a rich soil, and one of these was his father. Robert and his brother Gilbert not only learned many facts about the world, but were taught to see and think ; they were especially drilled by a country school-master of uncommon sense in the use of words, their meaning, their order, their simple and their poetic uses ; and no small part of Burns's achievement was his magical skill in making plain words serve the highest uses of the imagination. In the years when a child's nature lies open to every influence like an unshaded field, the gentle Ayrshire lass who was his mother poured into him a wealth of Scotch poetry in songs, ballads, legends, history — the very

## The Banks o' Doon and

stuff of which poetry is made. There were a few books in the house of the right sort at a time when books were held in great honor: lives of Wallace and other Scotch heroes, *The Spectator*, a few of Shakespeare's plays, Pope's translation of Homer; a few books which supplied the intellectual gymnastic which has given the mind of Scotland such vigorous fiber—Locke on "The Human Understanding," Boyle's Lectures, treatises on theology dear to the Scottish heart; and, above all, a collection of songs. "I pored over them driving my cart," wrote Burns, "or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic-craft, such as it is." After a generation's experi-

## For a' That and a' That

ment in trying to teach literature by text-book, chart, blackboard, dictated exercise, daily theme, recitation, and lecture, not a few unhappy instructors in English are asking if the path Burns took is not the best path to that love of literature which is the beginning of the knowledge of it.

Moreover, they were a reading family on the upland farm at Mount Oliphant; one who came upon them at meal-time found them equipped with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other! Here was a school of a freshness and inspiration which rarely opens to the boy of genius; and they are fortunate who, like Goethe and Burns, have the gates of the world of poetry flung wide by the hands of a mother! Blessed are the children born to the undefiled and indestructible heritage of poetry



## The Banks o' Doon and

and to the familiar and habitual use of the imagination which is the joy of life in an age which tries to live by reason ; as if the imagination were not the faculty of vision that carries reason on to the ultimate truths !

To these deep and fertilizing influences preparing the poet for his work must be added the inspiring atmosphere of Scotland, a country set immovably on the sternest realities, and yet never enslaved by them ; poor, but free ; practical of hand, loyal of heart, never without that gift of second sight which is one of the resources of a great temperament. Under the rugged soil of this rain-swept and sea-encircled land run quiet streams of sentiment, silent rivers of poetry, which rise out of a heroic past, a noble history of "lost causes and impossible loyalties," a

## For a' That and a' That

profound religious experience, half a thousand years' intimacy with some of the greatest poetry in literature, a strain of that mysticism which is the gift of poets and prophets and artists. Better a thousand times this irregular education which liberates and inspires than the dull way of mechanically directed schools and of those colleges that train the understanding and leave the creative faculty to get its education as best it can !

Burns was to deal, not with the rich results of thought, as Tennyson did, nor with the splendid play of personality daring to believe in its right and power, as Browning did, nor was he to record the reaction of knowledge upon faith, as Arnold did ; his business lay with the human heart and its elemental passions, with those great strains of independence, self-

## The Banks o' Doon and

reliance, and indifference to the badges of success, the external signs of power. He became the poet of the Scotch fireside and of the sturdy Scotch integrity; the most intimate singer the Scotch have ever known, and the dearest; the most outspoken singer of essential manhood, who has set the very soul of democracy to music. He was strongest when his feet were on the ground of simple emotions in the simplest speech; his art was weak only when he yielded to the influence of a sophisticated society. He was a plowman, and it was in the fields that he found the "Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r," and the "Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie"; it was in little houses of clay that he saw the tender and beautiful drama of the family in "The Cottar's Saturday

## For a' That and a' That

Night"; it was out of such homes that Mary Morison, Highland Mary, and Nannie came; it was at the wayside inn, on the lonely country road, and in the remote kirk that he found "Tam o' Shanter," "Holy Willie's Prayer," keen to the edge of irreverence with biting irony, the "Address to the Deil," "The Holy Fair"; it was out of the very heart of Scotland that "Auld Lang Syne," "John Anderson, My Jo," "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," and "A Man's a Man for a' That" issued like deep streams flowing from hidden fountains. No one can understand Scotland who reads the formal histories and leaves these intimate confessions of the soul out of account.

Burns had wonderful fidelity to life in detail, and wonderful freshness in giving detail lifelikeness; he had

## The Banks o' Doon and

the largeness and freedom of a powerful intellect, and he had the fierce and at times reckless energy of a great but imperfectly controlled personality. When he sings of the equality and dignity of man as man, he strikes notes which have reverberated through the English-speaking world; when he sings of the sorrow and sweetness of the Scotch home, or the tenderness akin to sadness of love, he touches the hidden sources of smiles and tears; when he gives his genius for touching life on the quick, his rollicking and audacious humor, his fresh and vital diction, free rein, as in "Tam o' Shanter" and "The Jolly Beggars," he achieves, as Matthew Arnold has said, "superb poetic success." But Burns is dear to us most of all in "Auld Lang Syne," in "Duncan Gray," in "Whistle an'

For a' That and a' That

I'll Come to You, My Lad," and a dozen other poems compounded of the very stuff of the poetry which once heard lingers in the ear and lives in the heart; a tenderness akin to tears, piercing pathos, sparkling wit, a manner at once intimate and masterful, a sense of human fate appealingly tragic or touched as by a wing astray from heaven.

FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

Is there for honest poverty  
Wha hings his head, and a' that?  
The coward slave, we pass him by —  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that an' a' that,  
Our toils obscure, and a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin gray, and a' that?

## The Banks o' Doon and

Gie fools their silks, and knaves their  
wine —

A man 's a man for a' that.

For a' that an' a' that,

Their tinsel show, an' a' that,

The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd "a lord,"

Wha struts, an' stares, and a' that ?

Though hundreds worship at his word,  
He 's but a cuif for a' that.

For a' that and a' that,

His ribband, star, and a' that,

The man of independent mind,  
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak' a belted knight,

A marquis, duke, an' a' that ;

But an honest man 's aboon his might —

Guid faith, he mauna fa' that !

For a' that an' a' that,

Their dignities, and a' that,

The pith o' sense and pride o' worth  
Are higher rank than a' that.

For a' That and a' That

Then let us pray that come it may  
    (As come it will for a' that)  
That Sense and Worth o'er a' the earth  
    Shall bear the gree an' a' that !  
For a' that an' a' that,  
    It's comin' yet for a' that,  
When man to man the world o'er  
    Shall brithers be for a' that.

#### THE BANKS O' DOON

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
    How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair ?  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
    And I sae weary, fu' o' care ?  
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling  
    bird,  
    That wantons through the flowering  
    thorn !  
Thou minds me o' departed joys,  
    Departed never to return.  
Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon  
    To see the rose and woodbine twine ;  
And ilka bird sang o' its luvie,  
    And fondly sae did I o' mine.



## The Banks o' Doon

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,  
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!  
And my fause luvver staw my rose —  
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.



## TO A SKYLARK

SHELLEY was a child of the Revolution and became its prophet; hence the extraordinary hold of his verse on later generations; hence also the wide divergence of opinion regarding the poet and the man. He had the spirit of a child—joy in nature, faith in impulse, guileless belief in men; a kind of radiant lawlessness that made the universe the playground of its imagination and artlessly re-formed it as if it were plastic to the hand. He had the mind of the prophet—intent on the realization of certain passionately held convictions and with an indifference to actualities that effaced

## To a Skylark

them. There are those who love him as a pure, unworldly, disinterested spirit, filled with an unquenchable hatred of tyranny and an ardent love of men; and these things are true of him. There are those who think of him as a moral anarchist, a law-breaker, and a violator of the sanctity of the home; and these things are also true of him. Clearly, here is a case not so much for charity as for the largest view of human responsibility.

Shelley had a most unfortunate parentage; his grandfather was an adventurer who had led a shadowy career in this country, and later laid the foundations of a substantial estate in England by eloping with two heiresses. His father was a well-meaning, conventional, and stupid person, with as little comprehension of his son's

## To a Skylark

temperament and genius as an owl has of the aerial instincts and ethereal singing qualities of the skylark. "Tamed by affection but unconquered by blows," the sensitive boy found himself in the guardianship of a father who believed that men of his son's position in English society could be made as dull and externally respectable as himself by arbitrary authority. Timothy Shelley was of the earth, earthy, and his morals had no deeper rootage than social custom. He found his view of life adequately expressed by Lord Chesterfield, whose style he imitated in his letters; he held himself securely based on fundamental principles, while "the exalted mind of the Duke of Norfolk protects me with the world"; and he was ready to provide for as many illegitimate children as his son chose

## To a Skylark

to bring into the world, but a *mésalliance* he would not condone ! Shelley was unfortunate also in his friends ; they were mainly, to put it in plain English, a bad lot ; it was not that they were unconventional in morals as well as in habits of life, but they were sordid, selfish, without a keen sense of honor or delicacy of feeling. Matthew Arnold speaks of " Godwin's house of sordid horror," and it must be confessed that the spectacle of Godwin preaching freedom from all social and family ties as the evidence of the emancipated spirit, and Godwin continually borrowing money and making shift to live on his friends, is a sorry spectacle. Hogg had his good points, but was suspected of treachery in the house of his friend ; and the tawdry selfishness of Byron is relieved mainly by

## To a Skylark

his recognition of the unselfishness of Shelley. Of the Westbrooks, the unfortunate Harriet, who had a brief happiness with Shelley, bore him two children, lived unhappily through a few months of separation and then drowned herself, is the only tolerable human being. The story of these emancipated spirits is so unwholesome and repellent that it almost reconciles one to the Philistinism of the conventionally respectable. Shelley, whose spirit was compounded of fire and mist, of soaring aspiration and impatience with every kind of restraint, was as a shining angel in this motley company.

The young poet's characterization of his father was unpardonable; but the father had done all that lay in a man's power to break the parental tie, and to irritate, humiliate, and blast

## To a Skylark

the reputation of his son. Shelley has been held in abhorrence as an atheist by a host of people. At Oxford, where he saturated himself with Hume, he wrote a pamphlet on "The Necessity of Atheism," sent copies to the Vice-Chancellor and heads of the houses, and was promptly expelled. Later he wrote "Queen Mab," at the mature age of eighteen. These performances made an immense local sensation and put his name permanently on the black list. People did not realize, apparently, that he was a boy in years; nor did they understand that he never really came in contact with God at all. He was raging against an irresponsible, tyrannical, incredible deity who bore as little resemblance to the God of the New Testament as did Baal or Moloch. So far as this

## To a Skylark

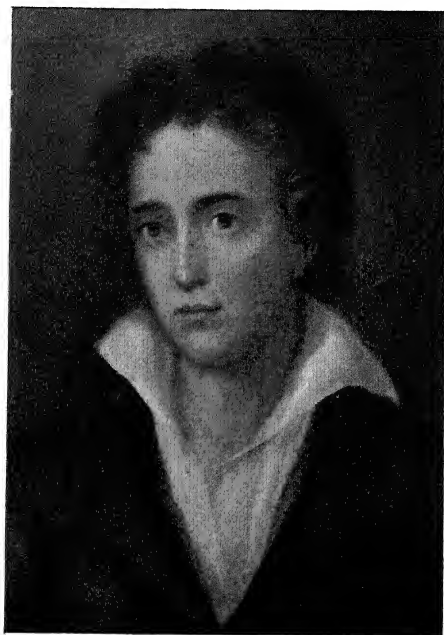
aspect of Shelley's career was concerned, it is not too much to say that it was the dawning of the true God-idea in his mind that set him in battle against the tribal God of a partialistic and dying theology. "Change the *name*," said Robertson, one of the most saintly spirits of our time, "and I will bid that *character* defiance with you."

The real stain on Shelley's fame is his separation from Harriet Westbrook and his "free-union" with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. This act, which inevitably brought tragic consequences in its train, is not to be justified on any ground; but while it cannot be condoned, it can be explained. In Shelley's revolt against what he believed to be the tyranny and injustice of society he rejected legal marriage as a form of conven-



## To a Skylark

tional slavery for women, the source of many oppressive and unjust laws. In this position there is no doubt of his entire sincerity ; it was a moral conviction, not a disguised plea for license. Mr. Woodberry puts the case admirably when he says, "The belief of Shelley in love without marriage was an extreme way of stating his disbelief in marriage without love." So deep and so sincere was his horror of a legal relation without the justification of love that he disowned the relation itself. When he left Harriet, he explained his position to her with entire frankness, and made provision for her support ; he went to Switzerland with Mary Godwin, who had derived the same indifference to marriage from her parents, and he had the incredibly bad taste to invite Harriet to join them there ! All



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PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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## To a Skylark

this was in entire harmony with Shelley's principles, but entirely out of harmony with the moral order of life, in defiance of fundamental social law, and in violation of sane human feelings.

Shelley's career is a striking illustration not only of the futility but of the immorality of shaping life by impulse, however noble, without reference to actual conditions. This world is not only an idea but a reality ; it has not only a spirit but a body ; and health, sanity, and freedom are found only in submitting the impulse to law and bringing the abstract idea into working relations with realities. Shelley was a spirit of singular generosity and unselfishness, but he fell into the slough of lawlessness, because he disregarded the twofold relations of the human soul. He

## To a Skylark

understood this more clearly than some of his unwise apologists: "You might as well go to a ginshop for a leg of mutton as expect anything human or earthly from me." This was not only a very shrewd piece of personal comment; it was also an illuminating piece of literary criticism, and touches the fundamental defect of his work: its lack of reality. Whatever we are to become in the future, it is quite certain that we get our growth and fulfill our destiny here and now only by being thoroughly human; this is the quality of Homer and Shakespeare. Shelley often seems like a disembodied spirit unable to establish working relations with actualities, and so to gain the perception of truth which comes only as the result of experience; he was sometimes unmoral because morality — the real

## To a Skylark

and enduring order of things—is possible only when the spirit understands and accepts the conditions on which all sound and sweet human relationships are based.

Shelley left England for the last time in the early spring of the year 1818, went first to Milan, and later, after various changes of residence, settled at Pisa, or in its neighborhood. These closing years, though not without shadows, were probably the happiest in his troubled life. They were also the most fruitful in work of lasting value and growing maturity. To this period belong the "Œdipus Tyrannus," "Hellas," the "Epipsychidion," that poignantly beautiful elegy the "Adonais," the "Sensitive Plant," the Odes. On July 8, 1822, he was lost in a sudden tempest in the Gulf of Spezia.

## To a Skylark

The "Ode to a Skylark" was one of a brood of aerial poems which seemed to ascend out of his glowing imagination as the skylarks sometimes mount to the upper sky in quick succession when the July heat shimmers over English fields. This Ode, with those to Liberty and Naples, sounded new notes in English literature. Their eloquence and mounting music reveal Shelley's winged imagination, which was at home only in the sky. He was akin with the elements, the air, the sky, the ocean; a fiery ardor burned in his veins, and in his great moments he was like an old poet possessed by the gods. There was something mysterious and incalculable in his genius; something divinely beautiful in his nature and his poetry. "There was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially

## To a Skylark

(though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterizes the best works and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls) of the great masters of Florence and Rome," were Hogg's words in describing the expression of Shelley's face.

He was the child of the Revolution in his fierce hatred of tyranny, his passionate sense of injustice, and in the lawless assertion of his own will ; he was the prophet of the later and deeper movement for the liberation of humanity in his sense of human brotherhood, his instinctive espousal of the common fortunes of humanity, his ardent love of freedom.



## To a Skylark

### TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit !  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest,  
Like a cloud of fire,  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring  
ever singest.

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun  
O'er which clouds are brightening,  
Thou dost float and run,  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just  
begun.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven

## To a Skylark

In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill  
delight :

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven  
is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not ;  
What is most like thee ?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
As from thy presence showers a rain of  
melody ; —

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,

## To a Skylark

Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it  
heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows  
her bower :

Like a glow-worm golden  
In a dell of dew,  
Scattering unbeholden  
Its aerial hue  
Among the flowers and grass, which screen  
it from the view :

Like a rose embower'd  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflower'd,  
Till the scent it gives  
Makes faint with too much sweet these  
heavy-wingèd thieves.

## To a Skylark

Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awaken'd flowers,  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music  
doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine :  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal  
Or triumphal chaunt  
Match'd with thine, would be all  
But an empty vaunt —  
A thing wherein we feel there is some  
hidden want.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain ?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?  
What shapes of sky or plain ?  
What love of thine own kind ? what igno-  
rance of pain ?

## To a Skylark

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be :  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee :  
Thou lovest ; but ne'er knew love's sad  
satiety.

Waking or asleep  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a  
crystal stream ?

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not :  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught ;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell  
of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn  
Hate, and pride, and fear ;  
If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,

## To a Skylark

I know not how thy joy we ever should  
come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the  
ground !

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am lis-  
tening now !



## SIX SONNETS FROM LONGFELLOW<sup>1</sup>

**T**O approach Longfellow, the most popular of American poets, as a sonneteer is to suggest the rectification of the order of excellence in which his poems have been placed, and to put at the front the work which makes his fame secure. A poet of grace and sentiment, a lover of the domestic virtues and endowed with that courage of affection born of simplicity and sincerity to which the cynics are strangers, the author of "The Voices of the Night" had the cup of popular applause held to

<sup>1</sup> These sonnets are used by permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers of Mr. Longfellow's works.

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

his lips early and late ; but although a scholar and the companion of scholars, and dear to not a few with whom the plaudits of the hour are counted things of naught, there were always dissenters and unbelievers among the critics, and his death was followed by a period of indifference or derogation. The over-praise and the under-valuation will be equally void of weight when the final summing up is made and the final judgment announced. Meantime Longfellow will continue to be loved and memorized ; for he who sows year after year in the hearts of children will always reap an abundant harvest. Longfellow was not of the great ones ; nor, for that matter, are the vast majority of the singers whom the world has agreed not to forget. He wrote a good deal of rhymed



## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

commonplace; and so, for that matter, did Wordsworth, Byron, Schiller, Whittier. Time has already edited Wordsworth and Byron; it will edit Longfellow. When this work of critical selection has been completed, there will remain a volume of verse, distinctly American, and genuinely poetic and melodious, not as Beethoven and Brahms are melodious, but as Mendelssohn and Schubert are melodious.

Longfellow had a harmonious nature, a sensitive but controlled temperament, educational opportunities beautifully adapted to his needs, happy and congenial conditions and occupations, the companionship of scholars, the love of friends, and a quick and abiding popularity. Born in a provincial country and of Puritan ancestry, he was from the be-

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

ginning of his career a restorer of the tradition of beauty, culture, and the arts which a one-sided view of life and a bitter political and military struggle had broken. With Irving, he stands among the earliest interpreters of the old world of ripe civilization and rich historic association to a new world which, in severing governmental ties, had largely cut the deeper ties that unite peoples in the common heritage and achievement of civilization. When Poe charged Longfellow with plagiarism, he wholly misconceived the spirit and function of the author of "Outre-Mer," "Hyperion," and "The Golden Legend"; the same charge might have been brought against Shakespeare on the same ground. The young country was starving for beauty; Longfellow fed it with the

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

tradition, legend, romantic incident, the enchanting loveliness of art and nature in the Old World, as the little group of Transcendentalists fed its hunger for a more spiritual interpretation of work, occupations, and human relations by bringing it in contact with the Germany of Goethe, Kant, and Hegel, and the England of Coleridge. Longfellow was, at the beginning, a translator of rare sensitiveness and charm, as he was later a translator of scholarly accuracy and precision.

He was the first really popular singer in a country destitute of music and eager for the poetic rendering of the facts of its life. The Rumanians set all their occupations and experiences, from marriage, birth, and christening, through sowing and reaping, social and domestic festivals, to

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

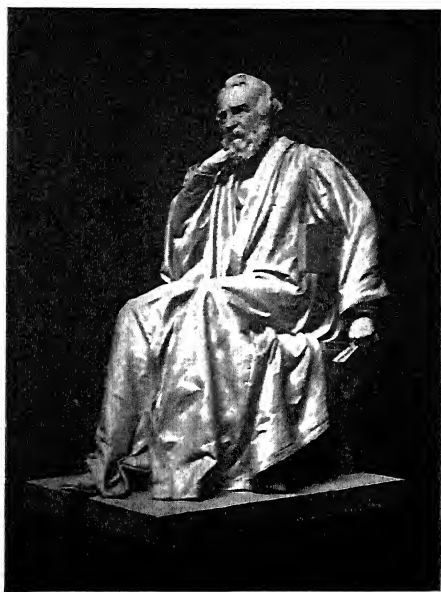
sorrow and death, to the music of popular songs so many and so naïve that they seem to spring out of the soil. Longfellow found tunes for universal sentiment, and set the most tender and intimate things to measures so simple that they ran like a fresh stream of sentiment through American homes. "The Arsenal at Springfield," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "The Fire of Driftwood," are charged with a tenderness so wide and human that one does not stop to examine their credentials of thought too critically.

If the unsympathetic find "The Psalm of Life" too elementary for their edification, they can hardly close their ears to the imaginative force and poetic skill of "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "Sir Humphrey

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

Gilbert," "Victor Galbraith," and a little group of ballads neither commonplace nor imitative; while "The Children's Hour" and "My Lost Youth" and a large class of poems which they represent have the charm of pure feeling and the beauty of phrase which the true poet alone compasses.

In narrative poetry Longfellow's achievements were of high and permanent value, and "Evangeline," "The Song of Hiawatha," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," gave Americans their first poetic renderings of native incident and story, as Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" gave them their first local legends. The translation of the "Divine Comedy" was the latest expression of Longfellow's generous passion to reunite the New with



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HENRY WADSWORTH  
LONGFELLOW

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## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

the Old World, as it was the most considerable achievement of his scholarship.

The group of sonnets, written largely in the last decade of his life, place him among the masters of this exacting and expressive literary form ; his sensitive imagination, deep feeling, and exquisite craftsmanship equipped him for success where even Tennyson failed, and set him securely among sonneteers of very high rank. "There is no single sonnet," writes Mr. Greenslet in his carefully phrased introduction to the whole body of the poet's sonnets, "so fine and memorable as many of Shakespeare's, as a few of Milton's and Wordsworth's, and as sundry fortunate sonnets by other hands that are among the choicest treasures of English poetry. . . . Yet their average is incomparably



## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

high." And nowhere is the height of thought and art so definitely registered as in the sonnets which accompany the translation of the "Divine Comedy," which belong with the best modern poetry.

### INFERNO

How strange the sculptures that adorn  
these towers!

This crowd of statues, in whose folded  
sleeves

Birds build their nests; while canopied  
with leaves

Parvis and portal bloom like trellised  
bowers,

And the vast minster seems a cross of  
flowers!

But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled  
caves

Watch the dead Christ between the  
living thieves,

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

And, underneath, the traitor Judas  
lowers !

Ah ! from what agonies of heart and brain,  
What exultations trampling on despair,  
What tenderness, what tears, what hate  
of wrong,  
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,  
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,  
This mediæval miracle of song !

### INFERNO

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door  
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,  
Lay down his burden, and with reverent  
feet  
Enter, and cross himself, and on the  
floor  
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er ;  
Far off the noises of the world retreat ;  
The loud vociferations of the street  
Become an undistinguishable roar.  
So, as I enter here from day to day,  
And leave my burden at this minster  
gate,

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to  
prayer,  
The tumult of the time disconsolate  
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,  
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

### PURGATORIO

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom  
Of the long aisles, O poet Saturnine !  
And strive to make my steps keep pace  
with thine.  
The air is filled with some unknown  
perfume ;  
The congregation of the dead make room  
For thee to pass ; the votive tapers  
shine ;  
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves  
of pine  
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to  
tomb.  
From the confessionals I hear arise  
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,  
And lamentations from the crypts  
below ;

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

And then a voice celestial that begins  
With the pathetic words, "Although  
your sins  
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the  
snow."

### PURGATORIO

With snow-white veil and garments as of  
flame,  
She stands before thee, who so long ago  
Filled thy young heart with passion and  
the woe  
From which thy song and all its splen-  
dors came ;  
And while with stern rebuke she speaks  
thy name,  
The ice about thy heart melts as the  
snow  
On mountain heights, and in swift  
overflow  
Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs  
of shame.  
Thou makest full confession ; and a gleam,  
As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase ;  
Lethe and Eunoë of the remembered dream  
And the forgotten sorrow — bring at  
last  
That perfect pardon which is perfect  
peace.

### PARADISO

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows  
blaze  
With forms of Saints and holy men  
who died,  
Here martyred and hereafter glorified ;  
And the great Rose upon its leaves  
displays  
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic round-  
elays,  
With splendor upon splendor multi-  
plied ;  
And Beatrice again at Dante's side  
No more rebukes, but smiles her words  
of praise.  
And then the organ sounds, and unseen  
choirs

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and  
love

And benedictions of the Holy Ghost ;  
And the melodious bells among the spires  
O'er all the housetops and through  
heaven above  
Proclaim the elevation of the Host !<sup>1</sup>

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O star of morning and of liberty !  
O bringer of the light, whose splendor  
shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
Forerunner of the day that is to be !  
The voices of the city and the sea,  
The voices of the mountains and the  
pines,  
Repeat thy song, till the familiar  
lines  
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy !  
Thy flame is blown abroad from all the  
heights,  
Through all the nations, and a sound is  
heard,

<sup>1</sup> Last stanza omitted.

## Six Sonnets from Longfellow

As of a mighty wind, and men devout,  
Strangers of Rome, and the new prose-  
lytes,

In their own language hear thy won-  
drous word,

And many are amazed and many doubt.



## THE LINES ON TINTERN ABBEY

**I**N 1793 Wordsworth, then in his twenty-third year, spent part of the summer in the Isle of Wight. On his homeward journey he walked over Salisbury Plain, where Carlyle and Emerson were to have a notable talk years later, made his way alone through the noble landscape of Somerset which is a charming prelude to the steep hills of Devonshire, crossed the Severn, and saw Tintern Abbey for the first time. Five years later he revisited the country about the Abbey, and so vivid and urgent was the impression it made upon him that he began at once to compose the



## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and finished the poem as he was entering Bristol, with his sister, at sunset, four or five days later. It was the poet's habit to compose out of doors and to complete a poem before putting it on paper. He was often overheard reciting his lines as he walked across the terraces and hills about Grasmere and Windermere; "booing," his rural neighbors used to call it.

The Abbey, the key to the landscape which inspired the "Lines," characterized by one of his biographers as the "consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith," is strikingly beautiful in its structure and surroundings. Furness Abbey, within two hours of Grasmere and Ambleside in these latter days, is far more extensive, Fountains Abbey suggests

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

a richer and more varied habit of life, Dryburgh enfolds the grave of Scott with a peace born of its old arches set in verdure and shade; but Tintern has a poetic charm due to its seclusion, the detachment of its ruined grandeur from modern association, the wild loveliness of the Wye which flows past it in a half-circle, the hill which rises beyond it, and the Severn which runs to the sea beyond the sight but within the vision. In the romantic beauty which secures great effects on a small scale and, in one of the most densely populated countries, keeps an air of that sacred privacy between God and nature in which poetry has its unfailing spring, Tintern Abbey is unique. Despoiled in detail, its beauty seems more complete and impressive than that of many a perfect church. The nobility

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

of its naked structure, the ascending symmetry of its aspiring lines, the sense of native strength and indestructible solidity which it conveys, conspire to open the imagination to the poetry of its devastated majesty and its buried history.

To Wordsworth it made the double appeal of natural beauty and of religious association, and it was characteristic of him to describe with almost unrivaled power of suggestion the neighboring landscape as it lay before the eye :

“These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows,  
    little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild ; these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the  
    trees ! ”

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

When the "Lines" were written, he was twenty-eight years old, and on the threshold of the wonderful twelve or fifteen years in which the deeps of his spirit were broken up and his rigid and stubborn nature was subdued to the finest sensitiveness, and his uncertain voice attuned to the purest music. After a winter in Germany in which "Lucy Gray," the lines on "Nutting," "Ruth," and other lyrical poems as simple as Nature and as instinct with life were written, the poet returned to the Lake Country to create its unique tradition, to illustrate with impressive dignity the life that is one with Nature, and to write his name on the roll of the English poets next after those of Shakespeare and Milton.

The "Lines" appeared first in that modest little volume of "Lyrical

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Ballads" which is almost worth its weight in gold to collectors, and which, ridiculed and derided by the professional critics of the time, is so rich in vitality that it promises to make even the name of its publisher, Mr. Cottle, of Bristol, immortal. It is true there were poems in the book to offend the orthodox and on which the true lover of the poet lays no emphasis to-day, but there were also "The Thorn" and the "Lines," so fresh in feeling, so original in insight, so magical in phrase, that it would be hard to understand the long indifference to their deep poetic beauty if one did not remember the immense vogue of Scott and, later, the intoxicating audacity of Byron, Wordsworth's earlier and later contemporaries.

Wordsworth's genius lay in the merging of his observation with his

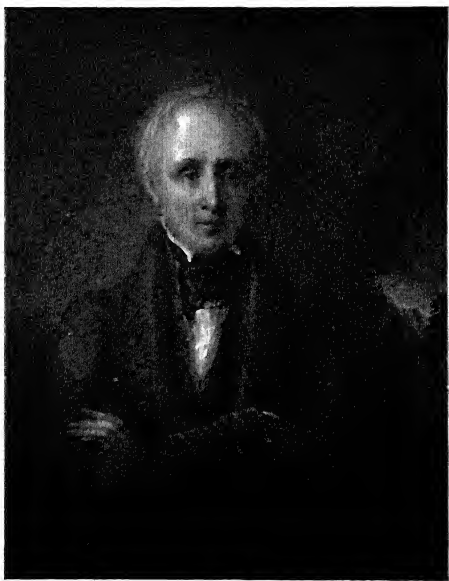
## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

vision ; he saw with perfect clearness and he divined with penetrating directness at the same moment. Observation passed without pause into meditation, and passion waited on both. He has described his own method in condemning that of the poet who goes to Nature note-book in hand : " Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms ! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home ; fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Afterwards he would have discovered that while much of what he admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated. That which remained, the picture surviving in his mind, would have presented the ideal

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

and essential truth of the scene, and done so in large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic." Here are some of the secrets of Wordsworth's power: clear and accurate observation, absorption by the mind of that which it has seen, instinctive selection of the essential and rejection of the non-essential, and vivid description, not by enumeration, but by suggestion.

Wordsworth described rather than defined poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"; and in his great moments he rises easily into this higher region where lives and moves the soul of things. Here, in a style at once plain, noble, intimate, impassioned, and penetrated with the beauty of the thought he is expressing, he applies the great-



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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

est ideas to life, to recall Matthew Arnold, and brings the world and the soul together until they are once more "whispering together of immortality."

In his inspired moments he sees the world as it lies in the sight of the eye and as it shines in the sight of the imagination; the actual and the visionary blend into one, the symbol becomes translucent, and Nature, through a myriad forms, one vast beneficent life. Rigid as he seemed, Wordsworth was in reality a man of deep passion, and the power of passion is one of the secrets of his greatness in perception and in expression. Not only did the "sounding cataract" haunt him like a passion, but the forces of his nature flowed together and the spring of poetry within him gushed up when Nature touched

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

him with her divining-rod in his happy hour. He had no style when he wrote poetry, but a tyro can imitate his style when he wrote verse, which he did in large quantities. When his work has been subjected to the austere judgment of time, much will be discarded; but that which will remain will be counted among the spiritual and artistic achievements of the English race. As Matthew has said:

“He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.  
He laid us as we lay at birth,  
On the cool, flowery lap of earth;  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o’er the sunlit fields again;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,  
Our youth returned, and there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead,  
Spirits dried up and closely furl’d,  
The freshness of the early world.”

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Five years have past ; five summers, with  
the length

Of five long winters ! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-  
springs

With a sweet inland murmur. — Once  
again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs.  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and  
connect

The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under the dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these  
orchard-tufts,

Which at this season, with their unripe  
fruits,

Are clad in one green hue, and lose them-  
selves

Among the woods and copses, nor disturb  
The wild green landscape. Once again  
I see

These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little  
lines



## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I  
trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed  
mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened: — that serene and blessed  
mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us  
on, —  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
And even the motion of our human blood,  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the  
power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft —  
In darkness, and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Have hung upon the beatings of my  
heart —

How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye ! Thou wanderer through  
the woods,

How often has my spirit turned to thee !

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished  
thought,

With many recognitions dim and faint,

And somewhat of a sad perplexity,

The picture of the mind revives again :

While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing  
thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I  
was when first

I came among these hills ; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led : more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads,  
than one

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Who sought the thing he loved. For  
nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone  
by)

To me was all in all. — I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy  
wood,

Their colors and their forms, were then  
to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, or any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is  
past,

And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other  
gifts

Have followed, for such loss, I would  
believe,

Abundant recompense. For I have  
learned



## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing often-  
times

The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample  
power

To chasten and subdue. And I have  
felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting  
suns,

And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of  
man :

A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all  
thought,

And rolls through all things. Therefore  
am I still

A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains ; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth ; of all the mighty  
world

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Of eye and ear, both what they half  
create,  
And what perceive ; well pleased to recog-  
nize  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the  
nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and  
soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the  
more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay :  
For thou art with me, here upon the banks  
Of this fair river ; thou, my dearest friend,  
My dear, dear friend, and in thy voice I  
catch  
The language of my former heart, and  
read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear sister ! and this prayer I  
make,

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Knowing that nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her ; 't is her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to  
lead  
From joy to joy : for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil  
tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish  
men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is,  
nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we  
behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the  
moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;  
And let the misty mountain winds be free  
To blow against thee : and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh!

then,

If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing  
thoughts

Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these thy exhortations! Nor, per-  
chance —

If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes  
these gleams

Of past existence — wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful  
stream

We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshiper of nature, hither came,  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love — oh! with far deeper  
zeal

Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then  
forget,

That after many wanderings, many years

## The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty  
cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were  
to me

More dear, both for themselves and for  
thy sake!



## TO HELEN AND ISRAFEL

LOWELL'S touch-and-go characterization of Poe—"three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge"—in the "Fable for Critics" has been accepted by so many readers as an authoritative valuation of his work that it is a matter of justice to both poets to set beside it the comment on the early poetry of the author of "Israfel" printed by Lowell in *Graham's Magazine* in 1845:

"Mr. Poe's early productions show that he could see through the verse to the spirit beneath, and that he already had a feeling that all the life and grace of the one must depend on and be modulated by

## To Helen and Israfel

the will of the other. . . . Such pieces are only valuable when they display what we can only express by the contradictory phrase of inner experience." Of the lines "To Helen" Lowell wrote: "There is a little dimness in the filling up, but the grace and symmetry of the filling up are such as few poets ever attain. . . . It is the tendency of the young poet that impresses us. Here is no 'withering scorn,' no heart 'blighted' ere it has safely got into its teens; none of the drawing-room sansculottism which Byron had brought into vogue. All is limpid and serene, with a pleasant dash of the Greek Helicon in it. The melody of the whole, too, is remarkable. It is not of that kind which can be demonstrated arithmetically upon the tips of the fingers. *It is of that finer sort which the inner ear alone can estimate. It seems simple, like a Greek column, because of its perfection.* . . . Mr. Poe had that indescribable something which men have called genius."

## To Helen and Israfael

Two qualities are credited to Poe in this estimate which have often been denied him : the presence of an inner experience behind the poem, which informs, irradiates, and shapes it and brings it within the field of high and sincere artistic achievement. Poe has been charged with being a "jingle man"; a calculating artificer in words; a hypnotist with sound; a magical craftsman, but not a genuine artist. He has been denied the gift of that melody which the "inner ear alone can estimate." He has been charged also with practicing the evil magic of those who deceive by imitation, and denied the magic of that ultimate grace which erases all trace of tool and toil. The simple fact is that Poe wrote a small group of poems as lovely and as far beyond the reach of analysis as the most delicate flower; and the



## To Helen and Israfel

very perfection of these pieces teases the critics who come to them with the usual academic apparatus or with the standards of distinctively ethical or intellectual art. It is a difficult truth for an over-sophisticated age to learn that the most exquisite works of art are only subordinately intellectual and that they gain their immortal bloom because they spring from a soil which no man has plowed or sown. Mr. Brownell, who brings to criticism gifts of concentration and analysis which no other American critic has commanded, recently paid Poe the tribute of a comment of extraordinary closeness of thought and minuteness of scrutiny — but left him unexplained. He fired a battery of artillery over a few flowers of exquisite and pallid beauty, and the flowers remain un-

## To Helen and Israfel

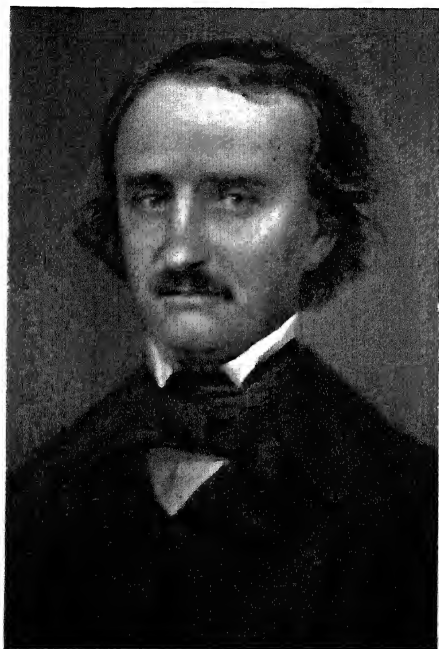
disturbed and of an inexplicable charm.

In March, 1831, there appeared in New York a slender volume which bore the inconspicuous title "Poems." It was a reprint of a previously published book of verse, with the omission of six poems and the addition of six. If any doubt of the original and creative poetic impulse and gift of the author remained after reading "Al Aaraaf," "Tamerlane," and "Fairyland" in the earlier collection, it disappeared when the lines "To Helen," "Israfel," "The City in the Sea," were read in the later collection. Here unmistakably a poet to whom the inner and the outer beauty were one, whose thought fashioned his art and whose art was of the very substance of his thought, was speaking; one whose sole con-

## To Helen and Israfel

cern was to reproduce in words the inner experience of a spirit sensitive to the lightest stir of leaves or the faintest glow of light on the world without imagining itself on the world within. These poems were not ethical or intellectual; they did not apply ideas to life; they were great neither in thought, experience, nor range; they were simply perfect. They were in a category which few American critics and readers of that time had framed; foreign critics and poets, who knew that beauty was a form of righteousness, and that there were forms of teaching afield which were not of the pulpit or of the reformers, had a place for them and knew at once where to put them.

They were the work of an apprentice hand; which deepens the mystery of their perfection. The lines "To



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EDGAR ALLAN POE

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## To Helen and Israfel

Helen " and " Israfel " were probably composed a year earlier than their publication, while the poet was waiting for his commission as a cadet, or while he was at West Point. With " Ulalume," " The City in the Sea," " Lenore," they establish the fame of Poe to be counted in the little group of American writers who have made contributions to the literature of the world. " The Raven " is probably the most widely known poem from American hands, and " The Bells " is not far behind it in popularity. Neither, however, is to be placed with the little group of almost faultless lyrics ; they have a magical effectiveness in the world of sound ; the touch of the virtuoso of genius on the open and closed vowels, and the use of the refrain and repetend, set free a subtle hypnotic influence which

## To Helen and Israfel

lays the listener under a spell; but there is an element of calculation which releases him when silence breaks the enchantment. But in a small group of lyrics Poe made a lasting achievement and showed a magical skill in producing a single striking and unusual effect, by concentration of interest, subordination of secondary meaning, compression of thought and feeling within a narrow compass, and the identification of the poem with a distinctive metrical effect; his theory and his practice blending with almost absolute precision and harmony.

Aside from the confusion of life which has no bearing on the specific quality and charm of his lyrics, the head and front of Poe's offense lay in the fact that he was an artist pure and simple, in an ethical and reformatory

## To Helen and Israfel

age when "all New England was a pulpit," and that he still appeals to a people intensely absorbed by their unescapable tasks and not yet sensitive to beauty nor awake to the meaning and place of art. He has waited long for clear and adequate appreciation; for the rank at home which has been given him abroad. He can afford to wait; for while his work lacks greatness of range, passion, reality, it shows the individuality of conception and distinction of workmanship which lie within reach of the true poets only. "I could not afford to spare from my circle a poet," wrote Emerson to a friend, "so long as he can offer so indisputable a token as a good poem of his relation to what is highest in Being." Is Poe's claim to rank among the poets disputed because it rests on



## To Helen and Israfil

songs so few and of a quality so elusive? When was poetry measured by magnitude or valued by bulk? How little there is of Keats, and how securely his kinship with the greater English poets rests on that group of odes and sonnets! How often Emerson came with serene and smiling face to the temple; how rarely he brought the gods the gift of immortal song!

### TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece,  
And the grandeur that was Rome.

## To Helen and Israfel

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand!  
The agate lamp within thy hand,  
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy Land!

### ISRAFEL

And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute,  
and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. —  
KORAN.

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell  
“Whose heart-strings are a lute;”  
None sing so wildly well  
As the angel Israfel,  
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),  
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell  
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above  
In her highest noon,  
The enamoured moon  
Blushes with love,  
While, to listen, the red levin  
(With the rapid Pleiads, even,  
Which were seven)  
Pauses in Heaven.

## To Helen and Israfel

And they say (the starry choir  
And the other listening things)  
That Israfeli's fire  
Is owing to that lyre  
By which he sits and sings —  
The trembling living wire  
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,  
Where deep thoughts are a duty,  
Where Love's a grown-up God,  
Where the Houri glances are  
Imbued with all the beauty  
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,  
' Israfeli, who despisest  
An unimpassioned song ;  
To thee the laurels belong,  
Best bard, because the wisest !  
Merrily live, and long !

The ecstasies above  
With thy burning measures suit —  
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,

To Helen and Israfel

With the fervor of thy lute —  
Well may the stars be mute !

Yes, Heaven is thine ; but this  
Is a world of sweets and sour ;  
Our flowers are merely — flowers,  
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss  
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell  
Where Israfel  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,  
He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,  
While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.



## ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

**W**HEN Keats composed the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in 1819, he was in his twenty-fifth year, and in the happiest hour of his creative work. To this period belong five odes which, by their various and unique excellence, place him among the greater English poets. "Endymion" has lines of exquisite beauty, and is penetrated with the spirit of poetry, but it fails both in construction and form to rise into the region of mature and ripened art. "Hyperion" has an amplitude of imaginative suggestion which discloses a great poetic force dealing with ma-

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

terials which, although clearly within its vision, are still beyond its grasp. There are evidences of structural genius and of the power to apply fundamental ideas to life in the longer poems; but Keats died too early for their full and instinctive play in his work. On this side, the side on which the greatest poets reveal clear mastery, Keats remains a poet of high promise; on the side of freshness of diction and imagination, of the magic which gathers from words their first delicious bloom and opens them to the very heart of their ultimate beauty, which captures and holds the elusive loveliness in things and in thought, Keats is not only a poet of achievement, he is the poet of poets; the type of concentrated poetic consciousness and a past-master of verbal felicity.

These claims for his pre-eminence

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

rest on the Odes, on "St. Agnes' Eve," and on two or three sonnets, and find abundant justification in their contrasting perfections. To the five Odes "St. Agnes' Eve," composed in Chichester in January, 1819, was a prelude, and "Lamia," begun in Shanklin in the following June, was an epilogue; between these two pieces of verse, the first of a marvelous richness of diction, Keats touched the heights of his art and made his lasting contribution to English poetry. The "Ode on Melancholy" has both a classic and a personal touch; beauty is still all-compelling, but "beauty that must die":

" . . . In the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine;"

in the "Ode on Indolence" the personal note is struck with diminished

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

resonance and fullness of tone; the odes "To Autumn" and "To a Nightingale" belong in the realm of purest poesy — the first mellow with the ultimate ripeness of nature, the second poised above the earth as truly as the bird with which it flies on equal wing.

These four odes, with the "St. Agnes' Eve," are saturated with the romantic spirit — drenched, so to speak, with romantic feeling; the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" stands in exquisite contrast, like a pure marble against a rich tapestry. Its restraint, its delicately etched detail, its imaginative insight and captivating charm of phrase, a certain ardor drained of its passion by time into a ravishing memory, — invest the ode with a loveliness which places it among the most precious possessions of modern



## Ode on a Grecian Urn

literature. The structure of the verse is simple: there are five rhymes in each stanza, the first two forming a quatrain and the second three a sestet. No known piece of sculpture shows the series of pictures in the ode, though Bacchic processions are common on antique urns, and one of the treasures of Holland House is a pastoral sacrifice very like that described in the fourth stanza. Keats learned his mythology at second hand; but he learned it through his imagination, as the Athenian boys who became its immortal interpreters in architecture, sculpture, and poetry learned and were inspired by it. At school, when the passion for knowledge suddenly possessed him, he learned Tooke's "Pantheon," Lemprière's "Dictionary," and Spence's "Polymetis" by heart; the gods

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

and goddesses came radiant out of these dry catalogues and lived henceforth immortal in his imagination.

The publication of Keats's "Letters" made an end of the mawkish tradition of his hysteria and sentimental weakness. He was sensitive, or he would not have been the poet of the Odes; but weak and passion-tossed he was not; nor did he die by the hand of dull-minded reviewers. The tragedy of his life cut to the quick; to receive in the same hour the consciousness of genius and the knowledge that death was coming with equal foot could leave no man unmoved. He was a pugnacious boy, with a glowing imagination; he had a perception of beauty so keen that it was poignant, and a love of it so intense that it was sensuous; but he died at twenty-five, the year after

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" was composed! The tumult of feeling gave place to calmness; during the last hours Severn read Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying" to him, and played Haydn's sonatas, which he liked best. The end came suddenly: "Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come."

"There is but one path for me," he wrote two years before his death; "the road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it." . . . "I must think," he said earlier, "that difficulties nerve the spirit of a man; they make our prime objects a refuge as well as a passion." Byron at the height of his great popularity he characterized as "a fine thing in the sphere of the worldly,



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JOHN KEATS

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## Ode on a Grecian Urn

theatrical, and pantomimical." After enumerating the "Excursion," Haydon's pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of taste as three superior things, he told his brothers that he was not speaking "with any poor vanity that works of genius were the first things in the world. No! for that sort of probity and disinterestedness which such men as Bailey possess does hold and grasp the tiptop of any spiritual honors that can be paid to anything in this world." The man who wrote these words, who met the tragedy of genius held out to him by the hand of death, who enriched his few brief hours with the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and its immortal fellows, in a moment of weakness composed his own epitaph; but it was rank injustice to put on his tomb, for the literal-minded to read in all coming time,

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

words to which his fame gives a ringing denial: "His name was writ in water."

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow  
time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our  
rhyme:

What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy  
shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What  
maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to  
escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What  
wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those  
unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes,  
play on,

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst  
not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be  
bare.

Bold lover, never, never canst thou  
kiss,

Though winning near the goal—yet do  
not grieve :

She cannot fade, though thou hast  
not thy bliss ;

Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot  
shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring  
adieu ;

And happy melodist, unwearied,

Forever piping songs forever new ;

More happy love ! more happy, happy  
love !

Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,

Forever panting and forever young ;

All breathing human passion far above,



## Ode on a Grecian Urn

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and  
cloyed,  
A burning forehead, and a parching  
tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious  
priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the  
skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands  
drest?

What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of its folk, this pious  
morn?

And, little town, thy streets forevermore  
Will silent be, and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate can e'er  
return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with  
brede  
Of marble men and maidens over-  
wrought,

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

With forest branches and the trodden  
weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of  
thought

As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation  
waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other  
woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom  
thou say'st,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," — that  
is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need  
to know.



## · THE HAMADRYAD

THE contradictions in Landor's career are so many and so dramatic that they give the keynote to his character. No other English writer has left such a variety and range of comment on life and art, and yet none has been more helpless in dealing with his own affairs; a man of meditative habit, brooding over men and events, he could say, "I never did a single wise thing in the whole course of my existence." Perhaps no man has contributed a larger number of great thoughts to English literature, and yet it is true, as Lowell said, that he was not a great thinker; not a great thinker, that is, in the

## The Hamadryad

sense of having a consistent and fruitful view of things. Of no other poet in our language can it be said more truthfully that his work has the classical qualities than Landor — the qualities of objectivity, restraint, simplicity, lucidity — and yet no one among English poets has been more impulsive, violent, and unbalanced in judgment. He thought like a sage and acted like a Titanic boy; he had a temperament of volcanic explosiveness, and yet it was his special gift to write poetry of crystalline purity of form and of the most delicately shaded beauty of feeling.

“I drank of Avon too, a drangerous draught  
That roused within the feverish thirst of  
song.”

Born in Shakespeare's country,  
Landor had something of Shake-

## The Hamadryad

speare's breadth of view, power of looking at things detached from himself, and fecundity; but he had little of Shakespeare's flowing humor, spontaneity, wealth of sympathy, and richness of imagination; and in method and form the two poets were antipodal. A scholar by instinct and training, deeply read in many fields, conscious of the extraordinary force of his mind, and of great physical strength, Landor's attitude toward the world was one of assured superiority. When he said, "I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select," he was well within the truth; there were a few, and they were of the best, who recognized his genius during his life; the larger reading public gave him small attention; and, forty-five years after his death, his

## The Hamadryad

guests are still few, but their presence is an honor to the host, and they linger late :

“I never courted friends or Fame ;  
She pouted at me long, at last she came,  
And threw her arms around my neck  
and said,  
Take what hath been for years delayed,  
And fear not that the leaves will fall  
One hour the earlier from thy coronal.”

Headstrong, tumultuous, rash, Lander was a violent republican while yet a boy at Rugby, correcting the scholarly estimates of bishops, even going so far as to wish that the French would invade England and hang George III between the Archbishops of Canterbury and York ! But there were genial slopes on the sides of this volcanic nature, and he never lacked devoted friends. In Trinity College,

## The Hamadryad

at Oxford, he was the "mad Jacobin," and succeeded in getting himself rusticated by sending, as a practical joke, a charge of shot across the hall into a room where a rival party was being held and then refusing to give any information about the occurrence. Returning home, he promptly quarreled with his father and set out to make his own fortune.

No man of greater genius, energy, and generosity of nature ever started on a more hopeless quest than did Landor when he left his father's house. He read diligently, worked hard, wrote "Gebir," an epic of tragic import, which the poets have always loved, but of which the reading public remembers only the famous lines on the sea-shell :

"Shake one and it awakens ; then apply  
Its polisht lips to your attentive ear,

## The Hamadryad

And it remembers its august abodes,  
And murmurs as the ocean murmurs  
there."

In 1808 Landor equipped a regiment and went to Spain to fight Napoleon; a romantic enterprise which dissolved in a cloud of quarrels, its sole practical result being the writing of "Count Julian." Then he married in great haste and repented through a long leisure; left England because his over-generous living bred importunate creditors; fled to Italy; spent two decades at Florence or in its lovely suburb, Fiesole; quarreled with his wife at sixty and returned to England; at eighty-three, a passionate and undignified Lear, he went back to Italy to be watched over by Browning, and to die like an untamed lion in 1864. At seventy-eight he published "The Last Fruit of an Old Tree,"



## The Hamadryad

and prefixed it with the haughty  
lines :

“I strove with none, for none was worth  
my strife ;

Nature I loved, and, next to Nature,  
Art :

I warmed both hands before the fire of  
life ;

It sinks, and I am ready to depart.”

Landor's literary activity, beginning in 1795 and ending in 1863, extended over a period of sixty-eight years. He was almost equally at home in English and Latin, in prose and verse, in essay, lyric, and drama ; he gave the word “ conversation ” a new and wider meaning in literature. He admired Pindar's “ proud complacency and scornful strength. If I could resemble him in nothing else, I was resolved to be as compendious

## The Hamadryad

and as exclusive." In his work in all kinds he revealed the qualities the lack of which brought his life into confusion: self-control, dignity, calmness, and temperance of speech. The "Imaginary Conversations" cover a wide range of ancient and modern life, and are crowded with close characterizations, criticism, and comment. "The citation of William Shakespeare," of which Lamb said that only two men could have composed it, he who wrote it and the man about whom it was written, is the most notable piece of literature that Warwickshire has produced since Shakespeare's time, and is a striking study of the poet and his neighbors at Charlecote. There are heavy pages in the "Pentameron," but there are also pages steeped in atmosphere of the older Florence and

## The Hamadryad

not lacking the Boccaccian flavor. In beauty of phrase, both in prose and verse, "Pericles and Aspasia" is a little masterpiece and belongs in a place by itself; for there is nothing quite akin to it in English. Like Maurice de Guérin's lovely fragment, "The Centaur," it conveys that elusive sense of the antique which is the soul of the religion, sculpture, temples, poetry that have so deeply wrought upon the human spirit. The joyous England of the Renaissance; the passionate, beauty-loving Italy of Boccaccio and Petrarch; the exquisite poetry of form and feeling, of art and life, of men and women moving in sculptural beauty under a cloudless sky — how vital and how penetrating the genius that compassed these various potencies of life, these diverse aspects of art!



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WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

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## The Hamadryad

The "Hellenics," some written originally in Latin and later translated into English, and some written originally in English, were finally collected and published in 1847.

"Who will away to Athens with me?

Who

Loves choral songs and maidens crown'd  
with flowers

Unenvious? Mount the pinnacle; hoist  
the sail."

To these exquisite poems the much-abused adjective "classical" belongs. They are perhaps the best examples in English of the qualities of antique verse: objectiveness, simplicity, lucidity, restraint; their charm is atmospheric, and issues from pure form, definiteness of line, and distinctness of molding. There is no touch of mysticism on these bright presences, no haunting sense

## The Hamadryad

of unfathomable abysses ; they have the beauty of natural life, the grace of unconscious action, the free play of spontaneous creation. The loveliness resides not in suggestion but in definition ; but definition which substitutes the play of a plastic hand for the precision of formal logic. Their beauty is the beauty of perfect form in a crystalline air, not the beauty of color heightened by a diffused richness of atmosphere ; it is the beauty of a free and gracious order rather than that of a poignant and penetrating individuality.

Rhaicos was born amid the hills wherefrom  
Gnidos the light of Caria is discern'd,  
And small are the white-crested that play  
    near,  
And smaller onward are the purple waves.  
Thence festal choirs were visible, all  
    crown'd





## The Hamadryad

At the long trains that hastened to the town  
From all the valleys, like bright rivulets  
Gurgling with gladness, wave outrunning  
wave,

And thought it hard he might not also go  
And offer up one prayer, and press one  
hand,

He knew not whose. The father call'd  
him in

And said, "Son Rhaicos! those are idle  
games;

Long enough I have lived to find them so."

And ere he ended, sighed; as old men do  
Always, to think how idle such games are.

"I have not yet," thought Rhaicos in his  
heart,

And wanted proof.

"Suppose thou go and help  
Echion at the hill, to bark yon oak  
And lop its branches off, before we delve  
About the trunk and ply the root with ax;  
This we may do in winter."

Rhaicos went;  
For thence he could see farther, and see  
more

## The Hamadryad

Of those who hurried to the city-gate.  
Echion he found there, with naked arm  
Swart-hair'd, strong-sinew'd, and his eyes  
intent

Upon the place where first the ax should  
fall ;

He held it upright. "There are bees  
about,

Or wasps, or hornets," said the cautious  
eld,

"Look sharp, O son of Thallinos!"

The youth

Inclined his ear, afar, and warily,  
And cavern'd in his hand. He heard a  
buzz

At first, and then the sound grew soft and  
clear,

And then divided into what seem'd tune,  
And there were words upon it, plaintive  
words.

He turn'd and said, "Echion! do not  
strike

That tree : it must be hollow; for some god  
Speaks from within. Come thyself near."

Again

## The Hamadryad

Both turn'd toward it: and behold ! there  
sat

Upon the moss below, with her two  
palms

Pressing it on each side, a maid in form.

Downcast were her long eyelashes, and  
pale

Her cheek, but never mountain-ash display'd

Berries of color like her lip so pure,

Nor were the anemones about her hair

Soft, smooth, and wavering like the face  
beneath.

“What dost thou hear?” Echion,  
half-afraid,

Half-angry, cried. She lifted up her eyes,

But nothing spake she. Rhaicos drew  
one step

Backward, for fear came likewise over  
him,

But not such fear: he panted, gasp'd,  
drew in

His breath, and would have turn'd it into  
words,

But could not into one.

## The Hamadryad

“O send away  
That sad old man!” said she. The old  
man went

Without a warning from his master’s son,  
Glad to escape, for sorely he now fear’d,  
And the ax shone behind them in their  
eyes.

*Hamad.* And wouldst thou too shed  
the most innocent  
Of blood? No vow demands it; no god  
wills  
The oak to bleed.

*Rhaicos.* Who art thou? whence?  
why here?  
And whither would thou go? Among the  
robed  
In white or saffron, or the hue that most  
Resembles dawn or the clear sky, is none  
Array’d as thou art. What so beautiful  
As that gray robe which clings about thee  
close,  
Like moss to stones adhering, leaves to  
trees,  
Yet lets thy bosom rise and fall in turn,

## The Hamadryad

As, touch'd by zephyrs, fall and rise the  
boughs

Of graceful platan by the river-side ?

*Hamad.* Lovest thou well thy father's  
house ?

*Rhaicos.* Indeed

I love it, well I love it, yet would leave  
For thine, where'er it be, my father's  
house,

With all the marks upon the door, that  
show

My growth at every birthday since the  
third,

And all the charms, o'erpowering evil eyes,  
My mother nail'd for me against my bed,  
And the Cydonian bow (which thou shalt  
see)

Won in my race last spring from Eutychos.

*Hamad.* Bethink thee what it is to  
leave a home

Thou never yet hast left, one night, one  
day. .

*Rhaicos.* No, 't is not hard to leave it :  
't is not hard

To leave, O maiden, that paternal home

## The Hamadryad

If there be one on earth whom we may  
love

First, last, forever; one who says that she  
Will love forever too. To say which  
word,

Only to say it, surely is enough.

It shows such kindness — if 't were possible  
We at the moment think she would indeed.

*Hamad.* Who taught thee all this folly  
at thy age?

*Rhaicos.* I have seen lovers and have  
learnt to love.

*Hamad.* But wilt thou spare the tree?

*Rhaicos.* My father wants  
The bark; the tree may hold its place  
awhile.

*Hamad.* Awhile? thy father numbers  
then my days?

*Rhaicos.* Are there no others where the  
moss beneath  
Is quite as tufty? Who would send thee  
forth

Or ask thee why thou tarriest? Is thy  
flock

Anywhere near?

## The Hamadryad

*Hamad.* I have no flock : I kill  
Nothing that breathes, that stirs, that feels  
the air,

The sun, the dew. Why should the  
beautiful

(And thou art beautiful) disturb the source  
Whence springs all beauty ? Hast thou  
never heard

Of Hamadryads ?

*Rhaicos.* Heard of them I have :  
Tell me some tale about them. May I sit  
Beside thy feet ? Art thou not tired ? The  
herbs

Are very soft ; I will not come too nigh ;  
Do but sit there, nor tremble so, nor  
doubt.

Stay, stay an instant : let me first explore  
If any acorn of last year be left  
Within it ; thy thin robe too ill protects  
Thy dainty limbs against the harm one  
small

Acorn may do. Here's none. Another day  
Trust me ; till then let me sit opposite.

*Hamad.* I seat me ; be thou seated, and  
content.

## The Hamadryad

*Rhaicos.* O sight for gods ! ye men below ! adore

The Aphroditè. *Is* she there below ?  
Or sits she here before me ? as she sate  
Before the shepherd on those heights that  
shade

The Hellespont, and brought his kindred  
woe.

*Hamad.* Reverence the higher Powers ;  
nor deem amiss  
Of her who pleads to thee, and would  
repay —

Ask not how much — but very much.  
Rise not :

No, *Rhaicos*, no ! Without the nuptial vow  
Love is unholy. Swear to me that none  
Of mortal maids shall ever taste thy kiss,  
Then take thou mine ; then take it, not  
before.

*Rhaicos.* Hearken, all gods above ! O  
Aphroditè !

O Herè ! Let my vow be ratified !  
But wilt thou come into my father's house ?

*Hamad.* Nay : and of mine I cannot  
give thee part.



## The Hamadryad

*Rhaicos.* Where is it?

*Hamad.* In this oak.

*Rhaicos.* Ay; now begins  
The tale of Hamadryad; tell it through.

*Hamad.* Pray of thy father never to cut  
down

My tree; and promise him, as well thou  
mayst,

That every year he shall receive from me  
More honey than will buy him nine fat  
sheep,

More wax than he will burn to all the  
gods.

Why fallest thou upon thy face? Some  
thorn

May scratch it, rash young man! Rise  
up; for shame!

*Rhaicos.* For shame I cannot rise. O  
pity me!

I dare not sue for love — but do not hate!  
Let me once more behold thee — not once  
more,

But many days: let me love on — unloved!  
I aimed too high: on my own head the bolt  
Falls back, and pierces to the very brain.

## The Hamadryad

*Hamad.* Go — rather go, than make me  
say I love.

*Rhaicos.* If happiness is immortality,  
(And whence enjoy it else the gods above ?)  
I am immortal too : my vow is heard —  
Hark ! on the left — Nay, turn not from  
me now,  
I claim my kiss.

*Hamad.* Do men take first, then claim ?  
Do thus the seasons run their course with  
them ?

Her lips were seal'd ; her head sank on  
his breast.  
'T is said that laughs were heard within  
the wood :  
But who should hear them ? and whose  
laughs ? and why ?

Savoury was the smell and long past  
noon,  
Thallinos ! in thy house ; for marjoram,  
Basil and mint, and thyme and rosemary,  
Were sprinkled on the kid's well-roasted  
length,  
Awaiting Rhaicos. Home he came at last,

## The Hamadryad

Not hungry, but pretending hunger keen,  
With head and eyes just o'er the maple  
plate.

"Thou seest but badly, coming from the  
sun,

Boy Rhaicos!" said the father. "That  
oak's bark

Must have been tough, with little sap  
between;

It ought to run; but it and I are old."

Rhaicos, although each morsel of the bread  
Increased by chewing, and the meat grew  
cold

And tasteless to his palate, took a draught  
Of gold-bright wine, which, thirsty as he  
was,

He thought not of, until his father fill'd

The cup, averring water was amiss,

But wine had been at all times pour'd on  
kid.

It was religion.

He thus fortified  
Said, not quite boldly, and not quite abash'd,  
"Father, that oak is Zeus's own; that  
oak

## The Hamadryad

Year after year will bring thee wealth from  
wax

And honey. There is one who fears the  
gods

And the gods love — that one ”

(He blush'd, nor said,

What one)

“ Has promised this, and may do  
more.

Thou hast not many moons to wait until  
The bees have done their best ; if then  
there come

Nor wax nor honey, let the tree be hewn.”

“ Zeus hath bestow'd on thee a prudent  
mind,”

Said the glad sire ; “ but look thou often  
there,

And gather all the honey thou canst find.”

The nights had now grown longer, and  
perhaps

The Hamadryads find them lone and dull  
Among their woods ; one did, alas ! She  
called

Her faithful bee : 't was when all bees  
should sleep,

## The Hamadryad

And all did sleep but hers. She was sent  
forth

To bring that light which never wintry  
blast

Blows out, nor rain nor snow extinguishes,  
The light that shines from loving eyes  
upon

Eyes that love back, till they can see no  
more.

Rhaicos was sitting at his father's hearth :  
Between them stood the table, not o'er-  
spread

With fruits which autumn now profusely  
bore,

Nor anise cakes, nor odorous wine ; but  
there

The draught-board was expanded ; at which  
game

Triumphant sat old Thallinos ; the son  
Was puzzled, vex'd, discomfited, dis-  
traught.

A buzz was at his ear : up went his  
hand

And it was heard no longer. The poor  
bee

## The Hamadryad

Return'd (but not until the morn shone  
bright)

And found the Hamadryad with her head  
Upon her aching wrist, and show'd one  
wing

Half-broken off, the other's meshes marr'd,  
And there were bruises which no eye  
could see

Saving a Hamadryad's.

At this sight

Down fell the languid brow, both hands  
fell down,

A shriek was carried to the ancient hall  
Of Thallinos: he heard it not: his son  
Heard it, and ran forthwith into the wood.  
No bark was on the tree, no leaf was  
green,

The trunk was riven through. From that  
day forth

Nor word nor whisper sooth'd his ear, nor  
sound

Even of insect wing; but loud laments  
The woodman and the shepherds one long  
year

## The Hamadryad

Heard day and night ; for Rhaicos would  
not quit

The solitary place, but moan'd and died.

Hence milk and honey wonder not, O  
guest,

To find set duly on the hollow stone.



## FOUR ENGLISH SONGS

SHAKESPEARE the dramatist looms so large on the stage of English literature that Shakespeare the lyric poet is overshadowed and thrust into the shade ; and yet in the poetry that is primarily musical and, so to speak, sings itself, the author of "Fidele," which Tennyson loved and which lay beside him on his death-bed, shows himself as much a master of the vocal resources of versification as of its potencies of emotion, passion, and terror. In a few flowing lines the common destiny, the general pathos, of life are touched so lightly that they can hardly be called the burden of his song, for



## Four English Songs

they convey no sense of weight ; but not one of the many contrasts between the place and power of the king as sovereign and his fragility as man in which the plays abound strikes a graver note. The common fate of the race could hardly be more tenderly and beautifully phrased. On the other hand, in the whole range of poetry there is not a lovelier morning song than "Hark ! hark ! the lark at heaven's gate sings," with its springing joy in awakening life, its jubilant welcome to the day in the rising of the lark, the setting forth of the sun, the opening of flowers, the happy call of love. The freshness and fragrance of the birth of the world are in these exquisite lines ; so free from care or toil, so akin with the hour and the streaming life they sing.

## Four English Songs

Born thirty years later than Shakespeare and dying in 1674, Robert Herrick kept the singing quality through the storm of civil war and was silenced only by death. A pastoral poet of very high rank, he is also a master of the lyric; indeed, if called upon to name the most beguiling maker of pure song in English, most lovers of poetry would probably name Herrick. In an age opulent in lyrical genius, he alone among the singers lived the life of a poet, undisturbed by the tumult of the time. Crashaw, Carew, Lovelace, Cowley, Davenant, felt the malign influence of civil war; Milton was lifted by its antagonisms as a bird rises against a strong wind, but the lyric joy of "L'Allegro" was no longer in the lonely soul of the author of "Paradise Lost." Herrick spent

## Four English Songs

fourteen years in Cambridge and twenty in a Devonshire vicarage. A clergyman of pagan temper, a priest of classical taste and culture, he could write the "Hesperides" and "Noble Numbers" without any consciousness of incongruity. He was a belated heathen who had strayed into a pulpit, but whose temperament and genius were not subdued by the dim religious light in which he preached, nor his frankly sensuous habit of speech toned down by ecclesiastical propriety. He wrote more than twelve hundred poems, most of them short; some of them mere snatches of song. In his study, it may be suspected, he read the classics oftener than the Fathers; and in his garden he seems always to have been breaking into little songs. And these little songs were the best of him;



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ROBERT HERRICK

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## Four English Songs

unforced, deliciously unconscious of official duties and dignity, they have the charm of perfect spontaneity, entire sincerity, overflowing spirits, untiring freshness of imagination, childlike joy in nature, in beauty, in life for its own sake, mastery of the liquid music of words. Herrick was a man of the earth, with a wonderful voice, who had strayed into a church and sang indifferently lyrics to old goddesses or hymns to the saints without any change of tune or temper. Mr. Gosse has said of the "Hesperides" that there is not a sunnier book in the world. "The poet sings, in short flights of song, of all that makes life gay and luxurious, of the freshness of a dewy field, of the fecundity and heat of harvest, of the odor and quietude of an autumn orchard." But life did not leave

## Four English Songs

Herrick untouched by its monitions, and the lines "To Daffodils," sound this deeper note.

The career of Richard Lovelace was in striking contrast with that of Robert Herrick. Born in 1618, two years after Shakespeare's death, he was for a time the darling of his generation, often called the handsomest man of his age; born to rank and wealth, of captivating manners, turning with ease from the reading of Greek poetry to music and to feats of arms, early a favorite at Court, he was thrown later into prison, his betrothed, thinking him dead, married another man, and after a few years of the recklessness that is born of despair he died in a cellar, in extreme destitution and in his early prime.

Lovelace was a poet as he was a courtier, a scholar, and a soldier; the

## Four English Songs

writing of verse was incidental in his adventurous and unregulated life. His work was stamped by haste and extreme carelessness; he was often trivial, affected, and frivolous; but there is a touch of gallantry, a heroic note, in his poetry as in his life. He had a manly temper, a loyal nature, and a command of the phrase that rings with conviction and restrained emotion; and these qualities made it possible for him to write two of the most spirited and noble songs in our language, and to give honor a definition which has become part of our common speech. The lines "To Althea from Prison" and "To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars," are to be counted among the finest English songs.

The lyric is, of all poetic forms, nearest the heart of the world be-



## Four English Songs

cause it is, at its best, simple in language, musical to the ear, and holds and conveys those experiences, passions, hopes and aspirations in which all men share. To the lyric has been committed the expression of all that is dearest to the heart of humanity: freedom, as Tyrtæus, Kōrner, and Burns have sung it; the rapture of youth and life as Shakespeare and Goethe have voiced them; the loveliness of nature as Theocritus, and the tranquil and penetrating truth of nature as Wordsworth have found speech for them; the mounting joy as Shelley sets it to music, and the mellow richness of the world as Keats evoked it in magical phrase; the tenderness and pathos and love of wife and child and home as Lowell and Whittier and Longfellow and a great choir of poets of



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RICHARD LOVELACE

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## Four English Songs

all races and times have given them speech.

The singing note in English poetry was heard oftenest between the birth of Shakespeare in 1554 and the death of Herrick in 1674. There were masters of musical verse before Shakespeare, and there have been many since Herrick, but they have not been primarily singing poets; their verses have not seemed to be trembling on the verge of song. The verbal harmonies of Swinburne are as capacious and varied as any in literature, but they do not seem to be waiting for the composer to set them to music. In the century after Shakespeare's birth there was a joy in life which, in the face of tragedy on the stage and in affairs, was a common emotion among poets; there was an unabashed delight in beauty in

## Four English Songs

nature and in women ; above all, there was an almost universal knowledge of music and skill in singing. The air was full of songs which were known to people of all classes ; practically the whole populace could read music and sing it in parts at sight. Poetry and music were still mated, and words were coupled with notes almost instinctively.

It was this singing habit of the English people, probably, that made the period from Shakespeare to Dryden so rich in the poetry that trembles on the verge of music ; for in every period in which an art flowers with prodigal richness it is significant that, while the practice of it may be confined to a few, the love of it and joy in it are shared by the many. Our thoughtful, earnest, care-burdened age has produced noble medi-

## Four English Songs

tative poems like "In Memoriam," deeply felt and finely phrased poems like the "Commemoration Ode," rhapsodies charged with imaginative power like "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," delicate and tender lyrics like Aldrich's "Nocturne"; but its poets have rarely sung as the birds sing in the dawn, forgetful of the night that has gone and care-free of the day that has come.

### FIDELE

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:  
Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;

## Four English Songs

Care no more to clothe and eat;  
To thee the reed is as the oak :  
The scepter, learning, physic, must  
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,  
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone ;  
Fear not slander, censure rash ;  
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan :  
All lovers young, all lovers must  
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

### HARK ! HARK ! THE LARK

Hark ! hark ! the lark at heaven's gate  
sings,  
And Phœbus 'gins arise,  
His steeds to water at those springs  
On chaliced flowers that lies ;  
And winking May-buds begin  
To ope their golden eyes ;  
With everything that pretty bin,  
My lady sweet, arise ;  
Arise, arise.

## Four English Songs

### TO DAFFODILS

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see

You haste away so soon :

As yet the early-rising Sun

Has not attain'd his noon.

Stay, stay,

Until the hasting day

Has run

But to the even-song ;

And, having pray'd together, we

Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,

We have as short a Spring ;

As quick a growth to meet decay,

As you, or any thing.

We die,

As your hours do, and dry

Away

Like to the Summer's rain ;

Or as the pearls of morning's dew,

Ne'er to be found again.



## Four English Songs

### TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO THE WARS

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,  
That from the nunnery  
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind  
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,  
The first foe in the field ;  
And with a stronger faith embrace  
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such  
As you too shall adore ;  
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,  
Loved I not Honor more.



## RICHARD CRASHAW

**I**F leisure, peace, and prosperity of condition are favorable to the writing of poetry, Crashaw fell on evil days. He was born probably in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, and he died in 1650; his working years were few, and they were coincident with the rising storm which dethroned Charles I and silenced the choir of poets who at the close of the Shakespearean age made England a "nest of singing birds." Crashaw's career stopped short of the tragedy which overtook some of his most gifted contemporaries; it was not overhung with melancholy like Cowley's troubled

## Richard Crashaw

life ; but it was spent largely in exile. The vicissitudes of his outward fortunes appear, however, to have left no reflection in his inward life ; unlike most men of genius of his time, he seems to have escaped inward struggle and to have found in religion the peace and joy which his country could not give him.

The story of his life is brief, and so indistinct through lack of detail that it is a bit of tracery faintly discernible on a fading surface. Born about 1616, the son of a clergyman eminent enough to be a preacher at the Temple, Crashaw began his education at the Charterhouse, with its fine sixteenth-century hall, its great staircase, and its later memories of Colonel Newcome ; the school within whose gates an ancient quiet still lingers in the heart of the oldest

## Richard Crashaw

London. In 1632 he was elected a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, whose ivy-covered inner walls and beautiful garden give it a unique place in that city of colleges. Five years later he moved across the street and became a Fellow in Peterhouse. Both these colleges are small and picturesque, and both are associated with Edmund Spenser. In 1641 he was admitted to a degree, probably that of Master of Arts. In 1644 a number of Fellows, of whom Crashaw was one, were expelled from the University because they refused to sign the Covenant imposed by Parliament. Crashaw entered the Roman Catholic Church, and a little later went to Paris, where he endured great hardships like many young Englishmen in exile in different parts of Europe. Cowley found him

## Richard Crashaw

in destitution, and presented him to the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria, who gave him aid and letters of introduction to influential people in Rome. In Rome he found employment as secretary to a Cardinal, and later secured an appointment as a Canon of the Church of Loretto; in this service he died in 1650.

Little is known about Crashaw's personality, but the fact that he had the friendship of Cowley and Selden counts for much. In the preface to the original edition of his works it is said, with some ardor of style, that his "Steps to the Temple" was written while at Peterhouse, where "he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow near the house of God: where, like a primitive saint, he offered more prayers in the night than others usually offer in the day";

## Richard Crashaw

that he knew Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish, and had skill in music, drawing, limning, graving; that he had rare moderation in diet; that "he never created a Muse out of distempers, nor, with our Canary scribblers, cast any strange mists of surfeits before the intellectual beams of his mind or memory." If this high-flown sentence means to convey the impression that he was free from the passion for conceits and far-fetched similies to which many of his contemporaries were victims, it must be taken as an expression of friendship rather than an exact characterization. There is no reason to doubt Crashaw's piety, but his well-known lines to an imaginary mistress of his heart beginning

"Whoe'er she be,  
That not too impossible she,  
That shall command my heart and me,"

## Richard Crashaw

and a little group of pieces on "The Delights of the Muses," indicate that his sainthood was not without the relief of very human emotions. The contents of the group of little volumes in which his poems originally appeared, now very rare, can be compressed into a single book of moderate size, divided under the titles: "Steps to the Temple," "The Delights of the Muses," "Sacred Poems," "Poemata Latina," and "Epigrammata Sacra."

Crashaw had both religious and poetic feeling, and in his happiest moments touched his work with the power of sincerity and the grace of imagination; at his best he shows capacity for an inspiration that lifted him above the affectations and artificialities of his age. But his critical sense did not save him from gross

## Richard Crashaw

absurdities and far-fetched conceits. He did not write academic exercises as often as did Cowley, of whom Dryden said: "He could never forgive any conceit which came in his way, but swept like a drag-net great and small." The poet in Crashaw often put the pedant to sudden flight; in a long-sustained, wearisome, and most unpoetic declamation to the effect that the arrow of a seraph could not inflame the heart of Saint Theresa he rises abruptly into the region of poetry in these striking lines:

"O thou undaunted daughter of desires !  
By all the dower of lights and fires,  
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,  
By all thy lives and deaths of love,  
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,  
And by thy thirsts of love more large  
than they ;



## Richard Crashaw

By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce  
    desire,  
By thy last morning's draught of liquid  
    fire,  
By the full kingdom of that final kiss  
That seiz'd thy parting soul, and seal'd  
    thee His ;  
By all the Heav'n thou hast in Him,  
Fair sister of the Seraphim !  
By all of Him we have in thee,  
Leave nothing of myself in me :  
Let me so read thy life that I  
Unto all life of mine may die."

Often diffuse and given to repetition ; writing, as Pope said, like a gentleman for his own amusement, Crashaw can charge an artificial form with real feeling and give it the interest of ingenious imagination. When he escaped from "fustian imitation of brocade," he was capable of a certain nobility and even splendor of thought and diction, and rose in a

## Richard Crashaw

few passages to passionate eloquence of style. "A Hymn of the Nativity, Sung by the Shepherds," is quaint after the manner of its time, and not free from conceits, but it has touches of tenderness and beauty which entitle it to a place among the true Christmas Hymns of English poetry.

### QUEM VIDISTIS PASTORES, ETC.

*A Hymn of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherds*

#### CHORUS

Come, we shepherds whose blest sight  
Hath met Love's noon in Nature's night;  
Come, lift we up our loftier song,  
And wake the sun that lies too long.

To all our world of well-stol'n joy  
He slept, and dreamt of no such thing,  
While we found out Heaven's fairer eye,  
And kiss'd the cradle of our King;  
Tell him he rises now too late  
To show us aught worth looking at.

## Richard Crashaw

Tell him we now can show him more  
Than he e'er show'd to mortal sight,  
Than he himself e'er saw before,  
Which to be seen needs not his light :  
Tell him, Tityrus, where th' hast been,  
Tell him, Thyrsis, what th' hast seen.

### TITYRUS

Gloomy night embraced the place  
Where the noble infant lay :  
The babe look'd up, and show'd His face  
In spite of darkness it was day.  
It was Thy day, sweet, and did rise,  
Not from the East, but from Thy eyes.  
*Chorus.* It was Thy day, sweet, etc.

### THYRSIS

Winter chid aloud, and sent  
The angry North to wage his wars :  
The North forgot his fierce intent,  
And left perfumes instead of scars.  
By those sweet eyes' persuasive powers,  
Where he meant frosts he scattered  
flowers.  
*Chorus.* By those sweet eyes', etc.

## Richard Crashaw

### BOTH

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,  
Young dawn of our eternal day ;  
We saw Thine eyes break from the East,  
And chase the trembling shades away :  
We saw Thee, and we blest the sight,  
We saw Thee by thine own sweet light.

### TITYRUS

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do  
To entertain this starry stranger ?  
Is this the best thou canst bestow —  
A cold and not too cleanly manger ?  
Contend, the powers of heaven and earth,  
To fit a bed for this huge birth.  
*Chorus.* Contend, the powers, etc.

### THYRSIS

Proud world, said I, cease your contest,  
And let the mighty babe alone ;  
The phoenix builds the phoenix' nest,  
Love's architecture is His own.

## Richard Crashaw

The babe, whose birth embraves this morn  
Made His own bed ere He was born.

*Chorus.* The babe, whose birth, etc.

### TITYRUS

I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,  
Come hovering o'er the place's head,  
Off'ring their whitest sheets of snow  
To furnish the fair infant's bed.  
Forbear, said I, be not too bold,  
Your fleece is white, but 't is too cold.

### THYRSIS

I saw th' obsequious seraphim  
Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,  
For well they now can spare their wings,  
Since Heaven itself lies here below.  
Well done, said I; but are you sure  
Your down, so warm, will pass for pure?  
*Chorus.* Well done, said I, etc.

### BOTH

No, no, your King's not yet to seek  
Where to repose His royal head;

## Richard Crashaw

See, see how soon His new-bloom'd cheek  
'Twixt mother's breasts is gone to bed.  
Sweet choice, said we, no way but so,  
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow!  
*Chorus.* Sweet choice, said we, etc.

### FULL CHORUS

Welcome all wonders in one sight!  
Eternity shut in a span!  
Summer in winter! day in night!

### CHORUS

Heaven in earth! and God in man!  
Great little one, whose all-embracing birth  
Lifts earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to  
earth!

Welcome, tho' nor to gold, nor silk,  
To more than Cæsar's birthright is:  
Two sister sees of virgin's milk,  
With many a rarely temper'd kiss,  
That breathes at once both maid and  
mother,  
Warms in the one, cools in the other.

## Richard Crashaw

She sings Thy tears asleep, and dips  
Her kisses in Thy weeping eye;  
She spreads the red leaves of Thy lips,  
That in their buds yet blushing lie.  
She 'gainst those mother diamonds tries  
The points of her young eagle's eyes.<sup>1</sup>

Welcome — tho' not to those gay flies,  
Gilded i' th' beams of earthly kings,  
Slippery souls in smiling eyes —  
But to poor shepherds, homespun things,  
Whose wealth's their flocks, whose wit's  
to be  
Well read in their simplicity.

Yet, when young April's husband show'rs  
Shall bless the fruitful Maia's bed,  
We'll bring the first-born of her flowers,  
To kiss Thy feet, and crown Thy head.  
To Thee, dread Lamb! whose love must  
keep  
The shepherds while they feed their  
sheep.

<sup>1</sup> This verse is not in the version of the Paris edition of 1652.

Richard Crashaw

To Thee, meek Majesty, soft King  
Of simple graces and sweet loves !  
Each of us his lamb will bring,  
Each his pair of silver doves !  
At last, in fire of Thy fair eyes,  
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice !





## TWO FAMOUS BALLADS

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## Shakespeare's Sonnets

### SONNET CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never  
    shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his  
    height be taken.  
Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and  
    cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and  
    weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
    If this be error and upon me proved,  
    I never writ, nor no man ever loved.



## TENNYSON'S ULYSSES

IT is safe to venture the prediction that, however Tennyson's work may be reduced in bulk by Time, that dispassionate and inexorable editor, the lines entitled "Ulysses" will survive all changes of taste and hold their place in English verse of the highest class. The poem has not only rare beauty and distinction but is the expression of the poet's genius on the highest level of achievement. It was composed in his earliest prime, and the morning air is upon it; a certain freshness, vigor, and spirited movement modulated and tempered by the classical sense of disciplined and ordered power.

## Tennyson's Ulysses

There never was a time in Tennyson's life when he was not a poet; from the earliest hour of childhood in the rectory at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, where a group of children of noble beauty made life a game of the imagination, to the hour when he fell asleep, the burden of years on his body but not on his spirit, "Cymbeline" lying by his hand. At fourteen the whole world seemed to be darkened for him by the death of Byron. Three years later, in company with his brother Charles, he published a slender volume entitled "Poems by Two Brothers," the opening lines of which read :

" 'Tis sweet to lead from stage to stage,  
Like infancy to a maturer age ; "

a curious prediction of that power of growth which was the law of life to

## Tennyson's Ulysses

Tennyson and which he registered with striking clearness in his work. In 1829 his poem "Timbuctoo" won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge, and a year later another slender volume of "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," attested his industry and his faith in his genius. Those who read these early verses with a hospitable mind found them delicate finger-work on the keys of speech rather than records of poetic thought. The little volume of 1832 had more to say, for the sensitive touch was beginning to evoke exquisite music, as "The Lady of Shalott," "Ænone," "The Palace of Art," and "The Miller's Daughter" indubitably showed. Here was verse of singular freshness of feeling for landscape, and purity of sentiment; how far this master of flowing melody would go was another matter.

## Tennyson's Ulysses

All doubts were silenced when the two volumes of "Poems" appeared in 1842, and the world read "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," "Dora," "A Vision of Sin," "The Two Voices," and heard for the first time the perfect music of "Break, Break, Break," in which the sea itself seems to sweep with melancholy surge through the narrow channel of a personal grief. The master of the delicate music of vowels and consonants, the artist of exquisite sensibility, had become a poet. Edward Fitzgerald, who read the poems in advance of publication, wrote to a friend :

Poor Tennyson has got home some of his proof-sheets, and now that his verses are in hard print, he thinks them detestable. There is much I had always told him of his great fault of being too full and complicated—which he now sees or fancies

## Tennyson's Ulysses

he sees, and wishes he had never been persuaded to print. But with all his faults, he will publish such a volume as has never been published since the time of Keats, and which, once published, will never be suffered to die. This is my prophecy, for I live before Posterity.

This was a bold prediction from one of the oldest of friends, who was also one of the frankest of critics, but it has already had abundant confirmation. Even Carlyle, whose mood in the presence of contemporary poetry was usually the blackness of thick darkness, wrote:

I have just been reading your Poems; I have read certain of them over again, and mean to read them over and over till they become my poems; this fact, with the inferences that lie in it, is of such emphasis in *me*, I cannot keep it to myself, but must needs acquaint you too with it. If you

## Tennyson's Ulysses

knew what my relation has been to the thing call'd English "Poetry" for many years back, you would think such fact almost surprising! Truly it is long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same.

In the decade that had passed since the publication of "The Miller's Daughter" and "The Lady of Shalott" Tennyson had not only studied his craft with the minuteness and insight of an artist sensitive to its most elusive and haunting effects, but he had drunk deep of the cup of sorrow. He had learned that power in the use of words lies largely in restraint, that depth of thought is reflected in clearness of statement, and passion in intensity not of emotion but of feeling, and that the harp yields its finer melodies to the hand that has mastered its



## Tennyson's Ulysses

strings with patient regard for the minute perfections that sink invisible in the achievement which they alone make possible. And this exquisite art had gained depth and power under the discipline of life. "‘Ulysses,’" Tennyson wrote, "was written soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and gave my feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in ‘In Memoriam.’"

Here, clearly, is the motive of "Ulysses": the steadfast facing of life, the ringing response to its appeal to the strong soul, the resolute hoisting of the sail on the great adventure. It records the spirit of the brave antique world, uncertain what lies below the dip of the sea, but ready to face whatever fate awaits the heroic heart in any world. The impulse that sent Ulysses

## Tennyson's Ulysses

restless and tireless through the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" was not drained by war and wandering; for such as he, in whom the tide of vitality rises to the flood, life is not accomplishment but adventure. Ithaca holds no relaxing rest of age for one whose will sets time at defiance, and sooner or later the imagination of the race was certain to summon the great adventurer to the rushing sea once more.

In the "Odyssey" the ghost of Tiresias draws aside the curtain of the future for Ulysses, foretells his safe return to Ithaca, the vengeance that will fall from his hand on the base suitors of his wife, and predicts another and more mysterious voyage:

" . . . then take a shapely oar  
And journey on, until thou meet with men  
Who have not known the sea nor eaten food

## Tennyson's Ulysses

Seasoned with salt, nor ever have beheld  
Galleys with crimson prows, nor shapely  
    oars,  
Which are the wings of ships."

And when Virgil and Dante come upon Diomed and Ulysses together in the "Inferno," the much-experienced wanderer describes this final voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules whence no man "farther onward should adventure." Such winged words he spoke to his companions of the unpeopled world beyond that —

    "We of the oars made wings for our  
    mad flight,  
    Evermore gaining on the larboard side.  
Already all the stars of the other pole  
    The night beheld, and ours so very low  
    It did not rise above the ocean floor.  
Five times rekindled and as many quenched  
    Had been the splendor underneath the  
    moon,

## Tennyson's Ulysses

Since we had entered into the deep pass,  
When there appeared to us a mountain, dim  
From distance, and it seemed to me so  
high  
As I had never any one beheld.  
Joyful were we, and soon it turned to  
weeping;  
For out of the new land a whirlwind  
rose,  
And smote upon the fore part of the  
ship.  
Three times it made it whirl with all the  
waters,  
At the fourth time it made the stern  
uplift,  
And the prow downward go, as pleased  
Another,  
Until the sea above us closed again."

In Tennyson's as Dante's setting of  
the closing act of this drama of adventure, Ulysses exhorts his comrades to  
dare whatever fate has in store and  
follow knowledge beyond the outer-

## Tennyson's Ulysses

most star, and on the later as on the earlier sea the untiring adventurer pursues his quest ; type of the human spirit, formed not for ease and content but for the eternal quest of experience.

### ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren  
    crag,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and  
    dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know  
    not me.

I cannot rest from travel : I will drink  
Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with  
    those  
That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and  
    when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

## Tennyson's Ulysses

Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart,  
Much have I seen and known ; cities of  
men

And manners, climates, councils, govern-  
ments,

Myself not least, but honor'd of them all ;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met ;  
Yet all experience is' an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravel'd world, whose mar-  
gin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled  
on life

Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains : But every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things ; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard  
myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

## Tennyson's Ulysses

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human  
thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the scepter and the  
isle —

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill  
This labor, by slow prudence to make  
mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centered in the  
sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I gone. He works his work, I  
mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs  
her sail:  
There gloom the dark broad seas. My  
mariners,

## Tennyson's Ulysses

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and  
thought with me —

That ever with a folic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I  
are old ;

Old Age hath yet his honor and his toil ;  
Death closes all : but something ere the  
end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be  
done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with  
Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the  
rocks :

The long day wanes : the slow moon  
climbs : the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come,  
my friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows ; for my purpose  
holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.



## Tennyson's Ulysses

It may be that the gulfs will wash us  
down:

It may be we shall touch the Happy  
Isles,

And see the great Achilles, whom we  
knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and  
tho'

We are not now that strength which in  
old days

Moved earth and heaven; that which we  
are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong  
in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.







3990